Dr. M. K. Gopala Pillai: Sir, in regard to that I may inform the honourable member that Government have been pleased to appoint a special malaria officer to go into the question deeply and very minutely and Government are awaiting his suggestions in the matter.

With regard to the supply of good drinking water to Muttam, I am glad to be able to inform the honourable member that the scarcity of water there was duly taken notice of by the Government and the Dewan was pleased to visit that place. Arrangements have already been made to procure good drinking water to that village by pumping water from Attinkarayar, that is near Valliyar and supplying water by means of distribution pipes. This gracious action of Government will mitigate the condition at Muttom in the near future.

President: The question before the House is that Government be granted a sum of Rs. 2,98,409 under Demand III—Public Health and Sanitation.

The Demand was then put to the vote of the House and carried and the grant was made.

DEMAND IV—PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

INCLUDING CAPITAL EXPENDITURE NOT CHARGED TO REVENUE.

Mr. G. B. E. Truscott: Sir, I move for a grant not exceeding Rs. 48,45,136 under Demand IV—Public Works Department, including capital expenditure not charged to revenue.

Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai (*Quilon* cum *Kunnathur*): Sir, I wish to offer a few remarks on the working of this department, and I wish to concentrate my attention in regard to the policy followed by the present Chief Engineer in giving contracts and the system of calling for alternative designs along with the tenders which nullifies the safeguard sought to be effected by the system of tenders. Sir, in recent times it has been found that a large number of firms from outside have come to Travancore and have been given contracts for the execution of large and small works. In former days it has been found that it was possible with the help of the P. W. Department and the expert advice that the officers of the department used to get works of first rate magnitude completed by local contractors quite satisfactorily and there are many instances in Travancore as standing monuments to the creditable work done by Chief Engineers who have been the heads of this department. Sir, if it is not possible for the departmental officers to give the proper designs and call tenders on such designs and if they have to depend upon other people for the purpose of designs

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[Mr. Kottoor Kunjukrishna Pillai.]

they make a pretence of a choice and give the tender to whomsoever they like, I am very humbly submitting that they are evading the system of tenders. There is no rule ; of course there can be no hard and fast rule—I quite realise that—that the Government or the Chief Engineer should always accept the lowest tender. It may not be possible in all cases. But I think local contractors or foreign contractors among themselves should be given equal opportunities to tender on specifications that are known, and on data already ascertained. Let me make myself clear, Sir. Suppose Government want tenders for a particular bridge. Without giving any design of the bridge, without mentioning the number of spans that are to be erected, without specifying the nature of the bridge, whether it should be reinforced concrete or rubble and cement, etc., without giving any such specific details, I understand that the department, calls for alternative designs along with tenders. One man may be giving a tender putting up his calculations on the basis of entirely different materials from those of another who tenders. Now there can be no comparison or competition in tenders and there can be no criteria to decide which is the most profitable tender for Government to accept. Sir, I find absolutely no reason to allow this system. This system gets round the safeguard provided by the system of asking for tenders. If it is found absolutely impossible for the department to prepare the necessary designs, if the department concedes its incompetency to give proper designs with regard to difficult works, I have got a suggestion to make. That is they must call for the alternative designs first—then the Government should be prepared to give the cost of that design—and then they must call in tenders on the design accepted by Government. Then only can there be a fair chance of competition among the contractors, whether they are foreign or local and they will compete and tender so that Government money can be saved. There are any number of instances which can be quoted to show that Government have lost substantial sums by not adhering to this system but asking for alternative designs along with tenders. One man gives a tender for a particular design and another gives a tender according to an entirely different design and the costs bear no comparison and the Chief Engineer is left to choose as he likes without any consideration for the actual costs involved and without giving a fair chance of competition to the contractors for one and the same design. Sir, this system ought to be stopped. I understand that in British parts they do not follow such a system. There in British India the system of accepting the lowest tender is followed. Sir, the Chief Engineer will give the answer that all contractors will not be able to do the work satisfactorily. He can call for deposit amounts. He can call

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for security money to be placed and he can say that the tenders of those people only who are prepared to furnish the security and who are able to finish the work in the required time will be accepted. There is no use in evading this question. It is a most important question that has to be taken note of.

Sir, I find with very great relief that hereafter at least Government are going to do away with the cement and steel works which have phenominally increased since the coming of the present Chief Engineer. Along with the increase in the number of outside firms even, simple bridges over small ferries, and small canals, are being constructed by the use of steel and cement.

We also find that in certain cases, the conditions required to be satisfied by the contractors tendering on a particular work, I mean in the case of at least one contractor, they are overlooked. I will point out a specific instance. With regard to the contract in connection with the Pallivasal Power House construction, I understand, Sir, that it was clearly stated in the notification in the Gazette that a particular sum of money has to be deposited in coins, not as a draft or any such thing, but in coins by every tenderer. I contend that any tender of any person who does not pay that amount as per that notification, the Chief Engineer has no business to open his tender and to look into it. If he does so, there is no meaning of his publication in the Gazette. Such irregularities there are. I do not wish to point out instances and bring in personalities. But I wish to point out very strongly and urge on the attention of Government that these irregularities should not be allowed to be continued and Government money ought to be saved. The Chief Engineer should not be allowed, in the guise of inviting alternate designs, to give contracts to whomsoever he likes and thus thwart a fair and free competition between the contractors.

Mr. T. Muhammed Ismail: Sir, I am glad to know that at last one of my several requests made last year has been made, and that is by re-constructing a bridge at Kanjirappally. The necessity for the construction of a bridge at Erattupetta was brought to the attention of Government several times. But the reply was that it required enormous sums. Last year it was told that it could be taken up only after the construction of a bridge on the Ponkunnam-Palai Road. I think the bridge that was under construction is practically over and therefore I request the Chief Engineer that it is high time he should take up the construction of that bridge, in view of the incessant clamour from the people about the matter. The completion of that particular bridge would become very important to the people, because, through it passes several roads leading from all parts of the country to Poonjar and from Poonjar, the roads lead to several estates.

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[Mr. T. Muhammed Ismail.]

(At this stage the President vacated the Chair and Mr. Kottur Kunjukrishna Pillai, one of the Panel of Chairmen, presided.)

Therefore, the Chief Engineer should bestow his immediate attention on this important bridge.

In this connection, I may also refer to certain provincial needs, such as repairing of bunds, culverts, etc., on the Kanjirapalli—Erattupetta road. The total length of this road is only 10 miles. During the rainy season that is, for 4 months in the year, it is impossible to travel on this road. But considerable traffic has to pass through it. If some attention is paid to this matter, the usefulness of the road is unlimited. Last time I said and I repeat it again now, that the Kottayam-Kumili road should be repaired and widened properly. If Mr. Truscott himself inspects it, not in car, he will realise the necessity for the same. If he will be pleased to get down at certain points after Mundakayam and walk along the road for some distance, I am sure, he himself will feel about the necessity of spending more money for this road. For about 16 miles, that is, from Mundakayam to Peermade, the road goes in a zigzag manner with mountains on one side and valley on the other. An ordinary person will be afraid to go through the road. Accidents are not uncommon. To prevent them, parapet walls have been constructed at some places. Once they are constructed, they are always left without repairs. All the parapet walls, throughout this 15 miles, are broken. My submission is they should be repaired forthwith to reduce accidents and that new ones be constructed so that the whole road may be kept in a safe condition.

Last year, I had only two or three requests and I am glad to note as I stated before that one has been attended to. Similarly I have one or two this time and I wish the Chief Engineer would take note of them and do the needful during the course of this year.

Mr. R. V. Thomas: Sir, in supporting the demand, I would bring to the notice of Government some of the important local needs. First, I shall refer about the bridge at Palai over the Minachil river. It has got a history of over a quarter of a century. In 1104, the construction of the bridge was actually complete when it was washed away by the floods. About a year and a half later, all the remnants of the washed away bridge were collected, so much so, the vestiges of the bridge took some time to be completely removed. Now, I understand a preliminary estimate has been prepared for the bridge and some expenses incurred. I request the Chief Engineer to begin construction of the bridge as early as possible. It is needless for me to say that Minachil is one

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of the richest taluks yielding a substantial revenue to the State coffers. Unhappily, very small amounts are spent on public works in that taluk. Roads, public buildings, schools, etc., are mostly the efforts of private enterprise. Of course, I concede that some roads are maintained by Government. But there are very many ryots' roads. Though there is a net work of roads in the taluk, very few of them are taken up by Government and being maintained. Again, there are very few public buildings that have been undertaken by Government. Very few buildings such as the Taluk Office. Anchal office, Satrom, and Police Station, are owned by Government. Munsiff's courts, Girls' schools, Government Boys' school, several Primary schools and several others are housed in rented buildings I have no objection to that. But I instance this to show how no big amounts are spent towards public works in that taluk. Hence it is a bridge at Palai over the Minachil river deserves to be immediately attended to. By the completion of such a bridge, a shorter way to Ernaculam becomes an accomplished fact. At present, there is no shorter route from Peermade to Ernaculam. The industrial, commercial and agricultural possibilities of the town will be established by the construction of the bridge I have stated now. Further, Meenachil river in this part is very deep. There is water almost throughout the year. During monsoons, it very difficult to go from one side to the other. It will be important to note at this juncture that there are very few English schools situated on the southern side of the river in the taluk. Almost all the schools, English and Malayalam, are situated on the northern side. There are 14 schools in all, out of which 10 are English High schools and they are situated on the northern side of the taluk. Therefore, during floods, it is very difficult for boys to cross the river without the help of a bridge. The boys find it extremely difficult to reach school in time. I wish the Chief Engineer would bear in mind all the circumstances I have stated and do the needful in the matter.

I would also impress on the extreme necessity for a bridge at Erattupetta. Last year to a question whether the construction of a bridge will be taken up the Chief Engineer said that the matter will be looked into. I think he attached some importance to my appeal and said that after the construction of a bridge at Palai, the construction of a bridge at Erattupetta will be considered. Now that Government have sanctioned the estimate for constructing two bathing ghats at Palai, I remind the Chief Engineer to put in hand those works. During monsoon times, the old bathing ghat would get flooded and it is impossible to bathe safely in the river. This

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[Mr. R. V. Thomas.]

matter has been urged on the attention of Government for over 12 years and one bathing ghat at least may be provided there Government did not move in the matter and now that they have sanctioned the estimates, I request the Chief Engineer would put in hand the construction of bathing ghats.

I would draw the attention of the Chief Engineer for a road from Puliyannoor to Palai, a distance to cover about 2 miles only. There is already an apology of a road. It should be gravelled. Even there, some portion of the road has been attended to by the ryots themselves. About three-fourths of the road is awaiting construction and I urge that the same may be taken up by the Government.

If this road is made cartable by the Government then it will be of very great convenience for traffic. During the months of June and July there would be heavy floods in the town. Meenachil river will be flooded six or seven months a year.

Chairman: The member has got only one minute more.

Mr. R. V. Thomas: During these floods which last for thirty days and more traffic would be held up. Buses plying between will be stopped and you will have to cross the road by ferry boats. If this one and a half miles road is finished there will be full traffic during floods also. I request the Chief Engineer to consider this question and do the needful.

Mr. P. R. Godavarma Raja: I wish to offer a few remarks on this demand. In the first place, I wish to draw the attention of the Government to the very unsatisfactory nature of many of the roads, especially in north and central Travancore. During monsoon time it is very difficult to go along these roads either in vehicles or by walking. In the rainy season we find many pit holes here and there along the road so that it is a nuisance to the pedestrians who are compelled to walk along the road and also to those persons who go in cars. Many of the roads are badly neglected. The amount allotted for the maintenance work are not properly utilised. Otherwise the roads would have been alright. I would therefore bring to the notice of Government this fact and I am sure the Chief Engineer will bestow more attention to this aspect of the question.

Another point I wish to urge is the lack of proper bridges in many of the places and that due to this it is difficult to cross rivers during the monsoon season. My friend Mr. R. V. Thomas has dealt with the necessity of two bridges in the Minachil taluk. I am

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also of the view that these bridges must be constructed immediately, so that the people may find it convenient to cross the river. My own opinion is that the Government should adopt a consistent policy of building bridges within a reasonable period, say, five, ten, or twenty years. It is better to appoint a committee to go into this question and prepare a scheme for the construction of bridges and opening of new roads where they are necessary. I am sure the Chief Engineer will take this into consideration and do the needful. I think a Road Committee should be appointed to do this.

Another point I wish to urge is about tolls. Almost all members of this House will agree that tolls have become a nuisance. It is my view that these tolls should be abolished and some other means of raising the revenue explored. I would urge that point also in this connection. With these words I oppose the demand.

Mr. A. T. S Khadar Bhoy (*Commerce and Industry, South*): Sir, I rise to oppose this demand just to offer a few remarks at the slow work of this important department. Sir, I have to bring to the notice of this House and the Chief Engineer the following facts. It is admitted that the pier at Quilon is very essential, as the trade there is increasing year by year. Several times merchants of Quilon waited upon previous Dewans and when Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer also came there the need for the pier at Quilon was brought to his notice. Every time favourable replies were given that it is under consideration. But to our disappointment, so far nothing has been done to the needs of Quilon traders who also pay a heavy tax to the Government in very many ways. If I am correct a few months ago when Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer came to Quilon to open the new municipal building, in his speech we were given a definite assurance that the work will be undertaken. But we do not know what has happened since then. So I would request Government to take this question immediately to help the traders at Quilon and expedite the matter as far as possible.

Mr. K. M. Korah; I rise to oppose the demand. I would draw the attention of the Government to the necessity of having a T. B. in Changanachery. A good number of years have passed since the T. B. in Changanachery was abolished and I need not emphasise the fact that Changanachery is one of the most important towns of the State. Even last year I brought this fact to the attention of Government and some two or three years back when the head of the administration visited Changanachery, in reply to an address which he received, he said that the work of preparing an estimate of the T. B. has already been taken up. But so far nothing has been done. I would request the Government to see that the T. B. is constructed at the earliest opportunity.

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[Mr. K. M. Korah.]

I would also draw the attention of the Government for the completion of the Alleppey—Changanachery canal. Years have passed since we began to agitate for the construction of this canal and only a very small portion remains to be completed. Let us hope that the canal will be constructed this year, if possible. The question of connecting Alleppey with Changanachery by land has been engaging the attention of the Government and even last year the representatives of Kuttanad were invited for a conference and as far as I know it was decided that a road from Changanachery to Alleppey should be constructed. On reading through the pages of the budget I do not find any provision made for the construction of this road. As I submitted on another occasion the labourers of Kuttanad hitherto used to get some work from the big agriculturists on whom they depend. On account of the peculiar circumstances prevailing there and on account of the financial difficulties of the agriculturists they are unable to give any work to the labourers from the months of Edavam to Vrischikam. It is in Vrischikam that the paddy cultivation begins. With the unprecedented fall in the price of cocoanuts, along with the cocoanut palm disease, people who used to raise paddy fields into compounds have practically abandoned it. If there is a road connecting Alleppey and Changanachery these labourers will be able to go to the different towns and thereby they may be able to turn out some work. Then the question may be asked whether they cannot go even now. There is no easy means of communication in Kuttanad. At present if the labourers want to go to towns they must go in boats and necessarily they will have to give a fare for the same. If this road is constructed they can go by walking. There are other reasons also which would weigh for the construction of this road I am at present emphasising only this point because I have already drawn the attention of Government for the necessity of connecting Alleppey and Changanachery on another occasion.

In this connection I may also speak a word about the bad condition of the Changanachery-Kottayam road. It is one of the roads through which you find very heavy traffic.

Chairman: The House will now adjourn and meet again tomorrow at 11- 0' clock.

The House adjourned at 5 p.m.

Trivandrum,
1st August 1938.

A. GUNAMONY,
Secretary to the Sri Chitra State Council.

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